



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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FEDERAL WATERS OFF TEXAS CLOSED TO SHRIMPING ON MAY 15, 2004

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announces that federal waters from 9 to 200 nautical miles off Texas will close to shrimp trawling at 30 minutes after official sunset on May 15, 2004, corresponding to the time that Texas closes its waters to shrimp trawling.

The shrimp fishery is closed annually off Texas to allow brown shrimp to reach a larger and more valuable size prior to harvest, and to prevent waste of brown shrimp that might otherwise be discarded due to their small size.

The Texas closure ranges from 45 to 90 days. The closing and/or opening dates of the Texas closure are based on the results of biological sampling by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This sampling is used to project the closure, which coincides with brown shrimp in Texas bays and estuaries reaching a mean size of 90 mm, and begin strong emigrations out of the bays and estuaries during maximum duration ebb tides. The termination date of the Texas closure is based on continued

sampling by TPWD to develop projections of when brown shrimp will reach a mean size of 112 mm, and when maximum duration ebb tides will occur.

NOAA Fisheries will re-open federal waters off Texas when the state of Texas opens its territorial waters. Historically, the opening has been on or about July 15. If there is a need to adjust the July 15 date for the termination of the closure, notification of the revised termination date will be published in the *Federal Register* and with additional news bulletins.

Fishery violations may be reported during business hours (M-F 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) to NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Region Law Enforcement Division at 727-570-5344, or after hours by calling the hotline at 1-800-853-1964.

This and other news bulletins are available on our homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>. NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.